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SIPDIS

BAGHDAD FOR AMBASSADOR ERELI

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [ASEC](#) [BA](#)

SUBJECT: DEATH OF PAKISTANI ATTACKED BY SHIA PROTESTERS

REF: A. MANAMA 149

[B](#). MANAMA 57

[1](#). (U) Summary: A Pakistani man died March 21 from burns suffered in a Molotov cocktail attack during protests at the detention of Haq Movement leaders. Five Shia youths may face murder charges and a possible death sentence. Sunnis and moderate Shia have condemned the violence. End summary.

[2](#). (U) Pakistani Shaikh Mohammed Riyadh died March 21 from burns he suffered March 7 when roughly a dozen masked Shia protesters threw Molotov cocktails at his pickup truck in the Shia village of Ma'ameer. The masked men were setting fires and fighting with riot police in protest at the continuing detention of Haq movement leaders (ref A). Authorities arrested five Shia shortly after the attack and, charged them with arson. After Riyadh's death, General Abdullatif Al Zayani, chief of the national police, told media that the perpetrators would be charged under the 2006 counterterrorism law. An unnamed Interior Ministry official told one local paper that the five have now also been charged with murder. (Note: Under Bahraini law, they could face a death sentence if convicted of murder. End Note.)

[3](#). (U) Mainstream Shia leaders condemned the attack. Sheikh Issa Qassim, Bahrain's pre-eminent Shia cleric, reminded his followers that bloodshed or destruction of public property are forbidden. The mainstream Shia Wifaq party, which had condemned the attack previously (ref A), reiterated its stance in a statement issued by Vice-Chairman Khalil Marzooq following news of Riyadh's death.

[4](#). (U) Sunnis have, of course, also condemned the attack. Shura Council member and president of the Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society (BHRWS) Faisal Fulad accused the unlicensed Haq movement and Shia activist Abdul Wahab Hussein of inciting violence against expatriate workers. Several Sunni editorialists criticized Wifaq leaders for not moving quickly enough to condemn the attack.

[5](#). (U) Rumors persist that Riyadh was actually observing the disturbance on behalf of the police or the Bahrain National Security Agency (BNSA).despite denials by both the government and the shipping company Unicorp International, Riyadh's employer. Radical Shia voices have stepped up their web campaign. For example, the blog Bahrainonline.org has posted a list of 1,047 people it claims are BNSA employees, many of whom are of Pakistani origin. (Riyadh's name was not on the list.)

[6](#). (SBU) Comment: Small clashes between police and radical Shia are constant here, but deaths and serious injuries are rare. Even among the more radical minority of Shia who support Haq, Riyadh's death will prompt many to turn away from the movement. Meanwhile, extremists in the Sunni community will seek to discredit even moderate Shia by

unfairly blaming them for this violence.

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